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STATE FOR AF/E AND PRM

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SUBJECT: USG HUMANITARIAN PLANNING FOR SOMALIA

SUMMARY

¶1. Fears of conflict between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the Islamic Courts are growing. USG and other humanitarian organizations are working together on contingency planning efforts. These include developing scenarios (based on the assumption that non-combatants will be forced to flee, either within Somalia or to neighboring countries) and identifying organizations and resources to manage possible outcomes. USAID and PRM continue to follow humanitarian events in Somalia very closely from Addis Ababa and Nairobi. If conflict does break out and spread, substantial new humanitarian resources will be needed for affected Somalis. End Summary.

Background

¶2. The humanitarian community working on Somalia is concerned that tension between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) and the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) could break into open warfare at any time and negatively impact a population already affected by years of conflict, drought, and flooding.

¶3. It is feared that if warfare breaks out between the two parties and their allies, large numbers of Somalis will be displaced (or further displaced) from their homes and livelihoods, and require substantial humanitarian assistance. Most observers believe that any major fighting will start in the Bay region where the TFG is based, and generate substantial population movements both within Somalia and across international borders into Kenya and Ethiopia. Once started, it is feared that the conflict may degenerate into a broader and bloodier war between the CIC and the Ethiopians.

¶4. We share these concerns, and have undertaken contingency planning of our own, while monitoring that of United Nations (UN) and other humanitarian agencies. The Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and USAID/DCHA's Offices of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Food for Peace (FFP) in Nairobi and Addis Ababa are closely following events in Somalia, and provided the information below.

¶5. Note: The humanitarian community working on Somalia has been largely based in Nairobi since the early 1990s due to insecurity in Somalia. A substantial humanitarian infrastructure has been built up in Nairobi over the last

15 year, which includes coordination mechanisms, think tanks, information gathering capacities, logistics (storage, shipping, airlift, procurement) and UN and NGO Somalia headquarters. End note.

Conflict in Somalia

¶6. OFDA and FFP are reviewing and revising the USAID/DCHA regional contingency plan for extensive conflict in Somalia. The plan identifies the geographic locations for possible conflict between various actors in Somalia estimates the number of potentially displaced persons, and predicts where they will flee. Based on this information, USAID/DCHA is reviewing humanitarian assistance resources needed, and identifying agencies with the operational capacity to meet the emergency needs.

¶7. The UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Somalia has outlined contingency plans for conflict in Somalia based on its new "cluster" system, to identify humanitarian needs, available resources and gaps, and potential implementing agencies and partners. The clusters are chaired by designated UN agencies and include representatives of international organizations and NGOs operational in Somalia. The main clusters are focused on water and sanitation, health and nutrition, protection, logistics, and food security.

¶8. The NGO Consortium of Somalia, made up of 190 international and local NGOs and headquartered in Nairobi, has actively participated in the UNOCHA preparedness planning process and provides a wide range of logistical, technical and administrative expertise to the contingency planning processes; members of the NGO

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Consortium are the primary implementers of UN programs in Somalia.

¶9. UN agencies had until recently healthy stockpiles of drug kits and non-food items (NFI) for Somalia. However, over the last month they have utilized and distributed most of these resources in their response to the flooding in south central Somalia. OCHA Somalia launched an appeal December 5 to address ongoing flood conditions in Somalia and to seek donations to replenish their stockpiles of drugs, NFI, and other resources that will be needed in the event of large scale conflict in Somalia.

¶10. OCHA Ethiopia has also drafted a contingency plan, based on the cluster system, and has called several meetings with USAID, PRM, and UN agencies for ongoing contingency planning for a modest influx of refugees and possible cross-border operations depending on how the potential conflict evolves. The UN system in Ethiopia is less inclined to work with NGOs as implementers of their plan, leaving NGOs less involved in the contingency planning process than is the case in Nairobi. Consequently, USAID/OFDA, more experienced in integrating NGOs within its contingency plan, is facilitating a preparedness planning process with its NGO partners.

UNHCR and Refugees

¶12. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has adjusted its contingency planning scenario upward to 200,000 asylum seekers entering Kenya from Somalia within a short (three to five month) time period. The revision is based on the increased likelihood that large scale hostilities will break out in Somalia between the CIC and TFG/Ethiopia. UNHCR and its partners have managed the current influx (37,000 to date in 2006), and, while stretched by the unanticipated flood response, are resourced and prepared to handle up to 40,000 more asylum seekers.

¶13. However, if large scale fighting occurs and 200,000 new refugees enter Kenya, a humanitarian disaster for both the new arrivals and the host Kenyan population could result. Additional financial and food resources will be quickly needed to respond to the health, food, and shelter needs of the new refugees and host population.

Food

¶14. Both USAID-funded food agencies (CARE and the UN World Food Program - WFP) have adequate food stocks with over 70,000 MTs; 27,000 MTs in Somalia with the remainder in Kenya, Djibouti, and Tanzania. WFP air transport in place for the floods could be used for air drops to access to areas cut off by floods or conflict. Agencies have adapted to the ongoing crises in Somalia over the past decade and effectively operate under a contingency plan now. The use of local Somali transporters and local NGOs for food distribution - with monitoring by CARE and WFP - has so far proven to be a resilient method of ensuring continued access to beneficiaries despite the many obstacles. Because both agencies utilize Mombassa port for food shipments and transit via roads from Kenya to Somalia, they would be well placed to respond to increased food needs on the Kenya border if a massive refugee influx occurred.

Conclusion

¶15. USAID and PRM are closely monitoring the situation. If warfare breaks out, most likely substantial USG humanitarian resources will be required to meet the humanitarian needs of affected Somalis.

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